

JOB PERFORMANCE PLANNING AND EVALUATION A Manual for Raters

The purpose of this document is to explain in more detail the procedures and objectives of the Employee Job Performance Planning and Evaluation Program.

Department of Human Resources
State of Tennessee

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Why Job Performance Planning and Evaluation Is Important

“Evaluation” of the job performance of employees is probably the most difficult task a supervisor faces. We know that most employees consider themselves at least “above average” in their job performance and would resent supervisors saying otherwise, even if their performance was marginal. As a result, supervisors are apprehensive about confronting employees whose job performance is marginal. Employees are equally apprehensive about being evaluated. Employees want to be thought well of by others, particularly by supervisors who are in a position to affect their future job opportunities through promotions and pay increases. Because both employees and supervisors are equally apprehensive about the performance evaluation process, most supervisors feel that employees don’t want to discuss their job performance with their supervisors.

This is not true.

Employees in all agencies who have participated in state surveys say that **lack** of feedback about their job performance is the most important problem they have with their supervisors—and the most important change their supervisors could make to improve their work! When asked how their productivity could be improved, a majority said better guidance on work assignments.

These facts have surprised many supervisors. Why would employees **want** to have a performance evaluation system? Here are some reasons:

- Employees want to know where they stand with their supervisor. They want to know what is expected of them and how well they are meeting those expectations.
- Most employees **want** to do a good job, and constructive feedback delivered in a non-threatening way helps them to improve their job performance. “A good performance evaluation system recognizes employees for good performance.

Why, then, are employees apprehensive about a performance evaluation program? Why do evaluation programs often not work in practice? Employees give us some good reasons:

- Too many supervisors are not honest. They give everybody an “exceptional” rating, even when some employees barely get the job done. To employees, that means good work is not really recognized. This creates a morale problem and overall productivity is affected. The supervisor loses credibility with employees and with higher management.
- Too many supervisors don’t know enough about their employee’s work to provide a sound evaluation. They don’t know “what’s going on,” either because they don’t pay attention or don’t seem to care.
- Too many supervisors base their evaluation on superficial aspects of their employees’ jobs, or on irrelevant characteristics of their employee. Even if unintentional, it’s not “fair,” and it reduces morale and the incentive to perform well.
- The problems listed above may lead to poor human resources decisions—promoting the wrong person, unfairly not recommending an employee for an annual salary increase, and so on.
- Too many supervisors talk about job performance only once a year, when a formal evaluation form is filled out. That often creates more problems than it solves—it is not constructive for the employee to hear only once a year what he or she is doing poorly. The vast majority of employees want feedback about their performance **at least** several times a year.

Another important reason for sound performance evaluation has been learned by supervisors whose actions to demote, suspend, or terminate an employee for inadequate job performance have been reversed by the Civil Service Commission or a court. Because of these reversals, many managers have **erroneously** concluded that it’s extremely difficult to discipline (including termination) an unproductive employee. That is

not correct. An employee **can** be disciplined for inadequate job performance—but it is less likely to be upheld when a supervisor fails to provide substantial evidence to support that action. Disciplining an employee, such as termination, for performance problems **does** become extremely difficult when performance evaluations completed by the supervisor describe the employee's performance as "satisfactory"!

The Job Performance Planning and Evaluation Program is quite different from typical performance evaluation procedures. It is intended to be a useful tool—one that will overcome many of the problems associated with traditional procedures mentioned by both supervisors and employees. The program will not help you to solve **all** of the difficult problems you face as a supervisor. However, we are certain that if you spend the time now to understand the basic principles underlying its use, and put it into practice in your agency, it will save you time in the long run and help you to improve the morale and the productivity of your work unit.

Your Responsibilities

Your key responsibilities as the rater in using this evaluation system will be to:

- Thoroughly explain the program to your employees—its purpose, how it will be used in your agency, the major steps, and when the formal performance evaluation will occur.
- Discuss with each employee his or her major job responsibilities, and describe specific performance expectations and outcomes for each responsibility. Make sure that the employee fully understands each responsibility and how performance will be assessed.
- Give frequent feedback and guidance to each employee, recognizing those areas in which the employee is performing well, and helping the employee resolve problems or improve performance.
- Conduct a formal evaluation of the employee's performance. The evaluation should be thorough, concrete, objective, and well supported with facts.

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ATTENTION:

Training opportunities to assist you in carrying out performance evaluation include:

Performance Evaluation

Organizational Policies and Practices

To sign up for these programs, contact your agency training coordinator or the Department of Human Resources, Strategic Learning Solutions at (615) 741-3673 or visit their website at

http://state.tn.us/dohr/resources/training/training_index.htm

The Role of the Reviewer

Who is the Reviewer? Your agency is likely to designate either your immediate supervisor, or your supervisor's manager, as a Reviewer. The Reviewer serves two purposes. One is to assist you, as the rater, when problems or questions arise concerning the evaluation program. A second responsibility of the Reviewer is to make sure that the critical steps are carried out appropriately and in accord with legal requirements. The Reviewer will sign the Job Performance Plan (and later sign or acknowledge the formal evaluation) once he or she is satisfied that the steps in the evaluation are being carefully followed.

The Job Performance Plan

Concerned about two aspects of the Job Performance Plan, the Reviewer will insure that all appropriate job responsibilities and expected outcomes are included in the Plan. The Reviewer may thus compare the Plans of employees performing similar jobs, and point out differences to make certain that these differences are appropriate. The Reviewer will also examine the performance expectations or characteristics of exceptional performance that have been defined for various responsibilities to confirm that they are clearly identified and consistent with the expectations defined by other supervisors.

Interim Reviews

The Reviewer may also wish to discuss with you the Interim Reviews you provide your employees, especially for those employees whose performance is deficient or may require corrective action.

The Formal Evaluation

The formal evaluation is a critical record that will be placed in the employee's personnel file. The Reviewer will examine each of the ratings of individual job responsibilities to verify that the explanation of the rating is specific and thorough. The Reviewer will also review your Overall Rating to confirm that it is adequately explained, given both the ratings of the individual responsibilities and the relative importance of each. The Reviewer may thus want to meet with you to discuss any of these points and to help you revise any explanations which are unclear.

Explaining the Program to Your New Employees and Preparing a Job Performance Plan

Explaining the Program

Meet with your new employees to explain the Program and to answer their questions. Be sure that you have read and understand the procedures outlined in this document, the material covered in the on-line training, and any additional information which has been provided by the Human Resources Office of your department or agency.

It's particularly important that you explain the process thoroughly to your employees. It's best to meet with each employee individually. This will make it easier to clarify points which may be unclear to an employee, and he or she will probably be more comfortable asking questions. This discussion may occur at the time you begin preparing the **Job Performance Plan**, or you may choose to explain the process to an employee first, and then prepare Job Performance Plans in a later meeting. Below are some of the key points to include in your discussion with each employee:

- We are meeting to discuss the Performance Evaluation Program and how it should be used in our work unit, not to carry out a formal evaluation.
- The first step in the program is to talk about your key job responsibilities, and to determine which tasks in each responsibility are important enough to deserve our attention. We will then describe what the very best performance of each responsibility would be, and record this information on the Job Performance Plan form.
- From time to time, we will meet to review performance of specific responsibilities. I will want to know about any difficulties you're having and how I can help you to overcome these difficulties. Also, I will tell you my observations of your performance. I want to emphasize that these reviews are not formal evaluations, but they help keep me informed on problems you face and ways to overcome them.
- I must formally evaluate your performance by (given date.) Your performance will be evaluated **only** on the job responsibilities outlined in your Job Performance Plan.

Preparing a Job Performance Plan

After discussing the evaluation process with your employee, the next step is to identify the job responsibilities on which the evaluation will be based, and the performance expectations or characteristics

of exceptional performance of these responsibilities. This listing of job responsibilities and corresponding performance expectations and outcomes is the Job Performance Plan.

The purposes of writing a Job Performance Plan are:

- To help you and the employee define the major responsibilities of the employee's job.
- To help you and the employee define performance expectations or work outcomes characteristic of exceptional performance of each responsibility. (The best possible performance.)
- To describe how performance on each responsibility will be evaluated.
- To provide initial suggestions or guidelines which may help the employee understand the responsibilities better.
- To serve as a basis for carrying out Interim Reviews and the formal evaluation.

By clearly defining performance expectations for each employee, goals and work objectives can be more readily understood and acted upon. If an employee knows what "exceptional performance" means in concrete terms, it is easier to attempt to become an exceptional performer. Similarly, if minimally acceptable performance is clearly defined, it is much easier for you to take corrective action when performance is unacceptable.

The most difficult task is clearly defining the performance expectations or characteristics of **exceptional** performance. These characteristics **must** describe performance that is truly exceptional, rather than merely "acceptable." But these descriptions must also be as concrete and objective as possible. To help make this task easier, a Catalog of job responsibilities and their associated performance expectations for some job classes has been developed. However, some illustrations of exceptional performance that you will find in the Catalog are not as clear or complete as they could be for some employees, so you may need to further explain and clarify these for each employee's work situation. The more concretely you describe your expectations, the more readily they will be understood by an employee. The less clear your performance expectations are, the more difficult it will be to provide concrete feedback and to later evaluate the employee's performance.

REMEMBER: Your description of exceptional performance (a rating of "5") is a commitment to the employee, and it defines a goal. If the employee subsequently achieves this level of performance, you are committed to giving that person a rating of "5." You CANNOT change your mind and redefine the meaning of a "5" at the time you formally evaluate the employee's performance.

Conducting Interim Work Reviews

Objective

The major objectives of the Interim Reviews are:

- To give praise and reinforcement for good performance.
- To give constructive feedback and guidance on responsibilities that the employee may be having difficulty with.
- To consider ways to overcome any work problems that may have developed.

Discussions about work often occur daily or weekly, but these relatively informal contacts are frequently misperceived by employees—the impression each has about your view of their performance is sometimes wrong or incomplete. A fundamental characteristic of effective supervisors is their skill in providing feedback to employees which is complete, open, honest, and clearly focused on getting the job done. The Interim Reviews you provide may thus be the single most important element of the performance evaluation system. The Interim Reviews are the key to one of your major responsibilities, enhancing employee job performance.

The Importance of Feedback

A common complaint of many employees is that their supervisors and managers discuss their job performance with them only when there is a serious problem. Interim Reviews should be regularly carried

out with **all** employees—those who are doing an exceptional job as well as those whose performance may be marginal or inadequate. Rarely, if ever, will an Interim Review be a waste of time.

“Positive” feedback serves the important function of recognizing an employee’s achievements and competencies. It serves to increase an individual’s feelings of self worth. The Interim Review discussion should **always** include positive feedback concerning those aspects of an individual’s job performance which he or she is handling well. “Negative” feedback is equally valuable **if it is constructive**. If it is clearly oriented toward solving a problem and improving the employee’s job performance, it is likely to be well received and appreciated by the employee.

The key to providing constructive feedback is to focus on the job—on specific work behaviors of the employee—not on the employee’s personal “traits” or characteristics. To the extent that you focus on the person and attack the employee personally, you are **not** providing constructive feedback. Express confidence and respect for the employee. Be concrete in describing the specific outcomes, behaviors or accomplishments which are needed, or in describing the specific outcomes or behaviors which are inappropriate. Recognize that your goal is to be helpful to the employee, not merely critical.

Identifying and Solving Problems

A second important purpose served by Interim Review meetings is to identify and attempt to solve problems that the employee may be encountering on the job. There may well be problems of which you were previously unaware, or have devoted little or no attention.

For example:

- An employee might have difficulty understanding how a particular responsibility should be carried out.
- An employee may be experiencing a problem in obtaining needed information from you or from others.
- There may be a problem in the work unit over which the employee has no control that is slowing things down.
- The employee may anticipate a problem arising in the future, and it might be useful to discuss that problem and ways to minimize its possible impact.

Planning Interim Review Meetings

The first Interim Review might occur shortly after the first Job Performance Plan is initiated, particularly if the employee has not recently received detailed feedback concerning his or her performance. In planning a meeting with an individual employee, arrange **in advance** for a time to meet. The employee should have sufficient time to prepare for the meeting.

The meeting should be conducted in private, **not** in a location where others are also present or can overhear the discussion. Before you meet with the employee, **prepare** for the discussion:

1. Review the Job Performance Plan. Consider each responsibility and your observations of how well the employee has carried them out with respect to the corresponding performance expectations listed on the Job Plan.
2. Identify three types of responsibilities: those that the employee performs well, those that need improvement, and those that you have little or no knowledge about the employee’s performance. Decide which of the job responsibilities you wish to cover. You do not have to cover all job responsibilities in one Interim Review. It may be better to discuss just one or two at a time. If there are several areas of weak performance, it may be a good idea to have three or more Interim Reviews. However, you **must** discuss each job responsibility at least once during the evaluation cycle.
3. After you have identified the responsibilities you want to discuss, show the list to your employee and ask if there are any additional responsibilities that he or she would like to talk about.

4. For each responsibility you plan to discuss, identify specific areas of competence or achievement, or areas that need improvement. Be specific. It may be useful to jot them down so you will not forget them in the course of your discussion.
5. When you must discuss a responsibility that is being performed at an unacceptable level, you will find that it will be less intimidating for the employee if you also discuss a responsibility that is being performed well.
6. Discuss your plans with the Reviewer prior to the meeting with the employee. He or she may have good suggestions on how to help an employee improve performance or how you can make better use of the evaluation system.

Conducting the Interim Review Discussion

Begin the discussion by asking the employee to review the job with you. Ask about problems he or she is encountering on the job, and how the employee thinks these problems can be overcome. Ask how you can help. Be very clear on this point—while it is ultimately the responsibility of the employee to perform the job as well as possible, it is your responsibility to do everything that you can to help the employee do so.

Next, discuss the responsibilities you want to review one at a time. Ask how well the employee thinks he or she has performed each responsibility. Then, discuss your observations, **both positive and negative**. It's important to explain your observations and to describe in concrete terms why your evaluation of the employee's performance to date is, for example, a "3" rather than a "4." The employee should understand exactly what you expect, and how a rating of "4" differs from a rating of "3."

“ State how you assess the employee's performance to date. How would you complete a formal evaluation for each responsibility discussed? State the rating you would give on each responsibility—1, 2, 3, 4 or 5—and give specific examples of work behaviors to support that rating.

“ Ask the employee if he or she agrees with your assessment, and if not, find out why.

It is especially important to identify any problems that you were unaware of.

“ Discuss any suggestions you have concerning how the employee might improve his or her performance, particularly if it is marginal or unacceptable. Seek the employee's suggestions also.

“ Describe the performance expectations that the employee must meet to receive the next highest rating, and agree on a reasonable length of time within which the performance should be improved. For instance, if the employee deserves a rating of "1" or not acceptable, based on the performance for the current evaluation period, describe what the employee must do to receive a rating of "2" or marginal.

“ State the implications of continued performance of each responsibility at its present level. (See rating scales on page 10.)

Don't be afraid to discuss your differences concerning the quality of the employee's performance. It is especially important to discuss these kinds of disagreements. You should not avoid conflict by simply agreeing with your employee. By avoiding these discussions, you could miss valuable information brought up by your employee about aspects of his or her performance which you had not considered or which you were unaware of. Disagreement during an Interim Review is not nearly as troublesome as during the formal evaluation.

Disagreement can often be resolved by clarifying in greater detail what you are observing and what you expect. Show how the differing levels of performance correspond to different ratings on the evaluation scale. After discussing any disagreements, you should make sure that the employee understands the specific job behaviors or work outcomes that you will require before a higher rating will be given. Unless the employee understands exactly what he or she must do to perform better (and thus deserve a better rating), it is unlikely that the employee's job performance will improve. This is true regardless of the employee's present level of performance.

Documenting the Interim Review

It is very useful to **document** the Interim Review discussion by completing the forms provided for that purpose. Good documentation of the Interim Reviews is especially important and useful when completing

the formal evaluation at the end of the evaluation cycle. If you have done a good job of recording the feedback you have provided to the employee, both positive and negative, and if you have described in concrete terms the employee's level of performance of each responsibility on the Interim Review forms, it will be relatively easy to reach accurate and fair ratings of performance. Accuracy and fairness are especially important if the employee's performance is seriously deficient and disciplinary action is warranted. Following each Interim Review, the Interim Review forms should be completed. Copies may be given to the employee and/or your Reviewer. Maintain the original in your employee file.

The Interim Review is not filed in the employee's personnel file but is kept with your own records.

Summary

At least two Interim Reviews should be conducted after completing the Job Performance Plan and before the formal evaluation. More than two may be useful, however, particularly if the employee is very weak in one or more aspects of job performance. The key points to keep in mind are these:

- The Interim Review should not be a negative experience for the employee. Be certain that you always point out what the employee is doing well, and that you express your confidence that the employee can do a good job.
- If changes in the employee's performance are needed, be sure to outline the specific things the employee should do to perform better. Set a specific time for these changes to occur, and plan on another Interim Review to assess the effects of these changes.
- If there are a number of performance weaknesses which should be corrected, it may be wise to focus attention on only one or two areas during a single Interim Review. Too much criticism at any one time will cause most employees to become upset and try to defend their performance rather than listen and try to improve their performance.
- Be sure to discuss what the employee needs to do to perform at the next higher level. If your current assessment of the performance of a responsibility corresponds to a rating of "3," say so, and explain to the employee what would be needed to obtain a rating of "4" or "5."
- Document what was discussed and concluded during the Interim Review following your discussion with the employee.

The Formal Evaluation

Rating Performance of Individual Job Responsibilities

The usefulness of this performance evaluation program will depend upon the accuracy of the ratings you give. Accurate ratings should not be difficult to assign if you have observed the employee's performance and if you have provided feedback to the employee during the Interim Review meetings. In theory, the performance of any responsibility can be assessed on a continuum from not acceptable to exceptional. To help the rater decide where the employee's performance falls along this continuum, anchor points are provided. In this evaluation system, the points are represented by the numbers 1 through 5, and each number is then given a definition. (The N/A option is discussed later.) A rating of "5" represents the best possible performance which can reasonably be expected of **any** employee. A rating of "1" describes job performance which is not acceptable, implying that if the evaluation were based solely on this responsibility, the employee should be subject to disciplinary action. The other points on this scale—"2" marginal, "3" good, and "4" superior—represent intermediate points on the scale. The rating scale for major job responsibilities is shown and explained on the following pages. Please note that this scale does **not** appear on your formal evaluation forms. You will need to refer back to this scale when giving your ratings.

What Each Rating Means

By itself, the scale is not a very satisfactory or useful way of describing performance. Performance which may be considered "exceptional" by one supervisor may be considered only "good" by another. Performance which may be described as "marginal" by one supervisor may be "not acceptable" to another.

The problem is that these are subjective terms, and they do not refer to the specific job behavior of the employee. To be meaningful, you **must** discuss with the employee what each of these terms means when applied to his or her performance. Since the formal evaluation is an “official” record of the employee’s performance which will be retained in the employee’s file, it could have significant impact upon you and your employee. It is vital that you and the employee understand the rating scale and its impact on administrative decisions.

A Rating of “1.” This rating should be used to describe the performance of any responsibility which is **not acceptable**. It should be used when performance of the responsibility is sufficiently weak that the employee’s work must be frequently checked to be certain that it is done properly; when the employee’s inadequate performance limits the ability of the work unit to achieve its objectives; when the supervisor or another employee must “cover” for inadequate performance of the responsibility; when the employee’s performance causes an excessive number of complaints from persons the employee serves; or for similar reasons which can be described by the rater.

This rating implies that the standards for exceptional performance described on the Job Performance Plan are almost never met. It also means that if **all** responsibilities were handled in this fashion by the employee, the employee should be removed from this job.

A rating of “1” for one or more of the employee’s responsibilities, however, does **not** necessarily mean that the supervisor is recommending that the employee be suspended, separated, or demoted. The relationship between the ratings of each responsibility, and the rating of the overall performance, (see page 12) is critical to this decision.

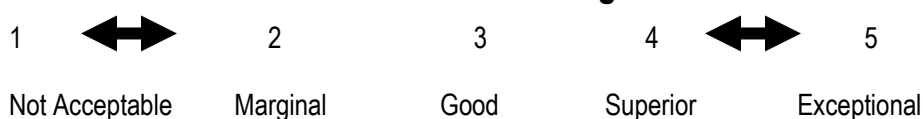
A Rating of “2.” This rating is used to describe performance of a responsibility which is **marginal**. It describes a level of performance which clearly needs improvement, but is not bad enough that if all responsibilities were performed in this manner the employee should necessarily be terminated. If you envisioned a job in which performance of this responsibility was the sole activity, you could not recommend the employee for a promotion or for a higher salary based on performance of this responsibility. The employee might occasionally meet some performance expectations for a responsibility but this seldom occurs.

A Rating of “3.” This rating is used to describe performance of a responsibility which is **good**. Performance of the responsibility often meets the performance expectations defined for exceptional performance. There is no immediate need to improve performance of the responsibility, but improvement is desirable and would make a better contribution to the objectives of the work unit. There are no **major** deficiencies in the employee’s performance of the responsibility, and based solely on this performance, the employee would be considered for promotion.

A Rating of “4.” This rating is used to describe performance of a responsibility which is **superior**. It means that the defined performance expectations are almost all met, or that they are met almost all of the time. If the employee were considered for a promotion to a job which involved solely this responsibility, the employee would clearly be recommended for the promotion. There are relatively few ways in which the employee’s performance of this responsibility could be improved upon.

A Rating of “5.” This rating describes performance of a responsibility which is clearly **exceptional**. The defined performance expectations are clearly and consistently met. It is virtually impossible to describe ways in which the employee’s performance of the responsibility could be improved. If the employee were to be considered for a promotion to a job involving solely this responsibility, you would argue strongly for his or her promotion—it would be difficult to imagine anyone doing a better job.

Two Critical Decision Points of the Rating Scale



Two decision points on this scale are particularly significant. These points are shown above. One point distinguishes **exceptional** from **superior** performance, or the conditions under which the employee would be rated “5” rather than “4.” One way of looking at the meaning of a rating of “5” is by comparing two employees, both of whom perform the responsibility extremely well and clearly deserve high ratings. If it is possible to describe the performance of one employee as clearly outstanding compared to that of the other, and if the more outstanding employee meets the criterion for a “5” (that is, if it would be difficult to imagine anyone performing the responsibility more effectively,) then that employee should probably be rated “5,” and the other a “4.”

Keep in mind two factors in defining the meaning of a “5.” First, although this description of performance must describe behavior which is **exceptional**, it must be **realistic**. If no one could conceivably perform the responsibility in the way you have defined it, you are being unrealistic. A rating of “5” must be an achievable goal, not one which only a superhuman could be expected to reach.

Second, it must describe behaviors or achievements which are **under the control of the employee**. For example, an administrative assistant using an older computer which is in poor condition and has outdated software programs cannot be expected to complete complex reports as efficiently as an administrative assistant using a newer, more powerful computer in good condition and with the most current software programs available. A laboratory technician cannot be expected to have all reports in on schedule if support staff responsible for preparing the reports fails to do so on schedule. Both of these are illustrations of factors affecting the work unit that the supervisor should be aware of and make efforts to overcome. It is the employee’s responsibility to keep you informed of factors which may be hindering performance, and it is your responsibility to meet periodically with employees to learn about these obstacles, to take whatever actions may be possible to overcome them, and to insure that individual employees are not penalized for factors over which they have no control.

The other critical decision point on the performance continuum illustrated above distinguishes a rating of “1” from a rating of “2.” A rating of “1” means that the employee’s performance is **not acceptable**, and that changes in performance are immediately necessary. If all responsibilities or one or more of the most critical responsibilities were performed at the “1” level, in conjunction with and part of progressive discipline, the employee should be terminated or demoted if progress isn’t immediately made. The rating of “2” means that even though the employee’s job performance is **marginal**, it’s not quite bad enough to terminate or demote him or her but corrective action is necessary and failure to improve will result in a possible recommendation for termination or demotion.

Essentially, then, when you are deciding whether to give an employee a rating of a “1” or a “2,” you are making the following decision: “If this was the employee’s only responsibility, would I be willing to tolerate this employee’s present level of performance of this responsibility. If not, is this employee’s job performance so bad that if improvement is not immediately made, progressive discipline disciplinary action is necessary and I should be prepared to recommend either disciplinary action, up to and including termination or demotion?”

This decision is especially critical when dealing with an employee on probation. If a probationary employee is performing at an unacceptable or marginal level, some action must be taken to remove the employee from that position prior to the end of the probationary period.

The N/A Option

In some cases due to an unusual circumstance, the employee being rated may not have had the opportunity to carry out a major job responsibility. Since the employee has not performed the responsibility, a rating cannot be given. In such a case, the rater should **not** leave the responsibility off the evaluation form. The responsibility should be recorded on the form as usual, and the rater should mark N/A (Not/Applicable). This way a record is kept which shows that the employee in this position was assigned the responsibility, and that, even though the employee did not have the opportunity to perform it, it is still considered a major part of the job. It is important that this information be recorded for classification purposes.

Note that the N/A option should not be used if the employee does not perform a responsibility because of inadequacy or inefficiency on the employee's part. If this is the case, the supervisor should rate the employee's lack of performance using the 5-point scale.

Documenting the Performance Ratings of Each Responsibility

Just as the ratings for each responsibility must be carried out with great care, so must the documentation supporting your ratings. Documentation of the ratings is so important that your manager or other review official **must** return it to you if documentation is incomplete or unacceptable. Examples of unacceptable documentation include such vague statements as "doing a great job," "performance is satisfactory," and so on. The description must be **explicit** and include concrete examples of the employee's performance of the responsibilities. Examples are: "letters and memoranda almost always include typographical errors which are not identified or corrected," "of fifteen case reports submitted, all were on time and only one required a minor revision," and "requires close supervision because recommendations frequently are based on insufficient information, though all recommendations are submitted on schedule." Good documentation is based on direct observation and description of the employee's performance or work outcomes, not on vague statements about the employee's personality or attitude. Remember that an "exceptional" rating is defined as all performance expectations being consistently met. So when the supervisor checks the "5" rating block on a responsibility, he or she must provide clear descriptions of work activity consistent with and performed at the "exceptional" level.

The Overall Rating

You must also provide an Overall Rating of the employee's job performance. The Overall Rating is also a 5-point scale with the scale points described as follows:

1. Overall job performance is **not acceptable**. Performance of one or more responsibilities is not acceptable.
2. Overall job performance is **marginal**. Performance of one or more responsibilities is marginal or not acceptable. Improvement needed to justify consideration for a promotion.
3. Overall job performance is **good**. All responsibilities are carried out **at least** marginally well, and some are good or even better.
4. Overall job performance is **superior**. Performance justifies recommendation for available promotion.
5. Overall job performance is **exceptional**. Performance clearly justifies strong recommendation for available promotion.

To reach a decision concerning the appropriate Overall Rating, you should consider both how well the employee has carried out each responsibility, and the relative importance of the various responsibilities to the job as a whole. Simply adding up your ratings of the individual responsibilities and using the average may not make much sense. Some responsibilities may be so important that their performance should be given more weight than others in the Overall Evaluation.

It's also important to consider what a particular Overall Rating means for the employee.

The Overall Rating describes specific decisions you would make about the employee, given the employee's performance in this particular job. **For example, if an employee is given a rating of "1" or not acceptable on any job responsibility, that employee should not be rated above "2" or marginal on the Overall Rating.** The decision of whether the employee deserves an Overall Rating of "1" or "2" is up to the supervisor and should be based on the specific behavioral requirements discussed with the employee in the Job Performance Plan and Interim Reviews. If you have been specific in describing behaviors that the employee should display to perform at the "2" level, then the rating the employee deserves should be clear and **not** a matter of guesswork. This decision should also depend on how critical the responsibilities rated a "1" are to the job. If the responsibility or responsibilities are a major part of the job, or are very important to the overall performance of the job, then the supervisor should give an Overall Rating of "1."

If you conclude that the employee's overall performance corresponds to a "1," or not acceptable, ***the employee is being put on notice that an adverse administrative decision is possible. An employee receiving an overall "1" may be subject to progressive disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. However, the supervisor should discuss any progressive disciplinary action with the reviewer and/or the agency human resources office particularly when considering a recommendation for suspension, demotion, or termination.*** . Because the supervisor has already discussed the needed behavior changes with the employee, the supervisor may choose to proceed with progressive disciplinary action or to give the employee a period of time in which to improve. It is ***important*** that the employee know at the time of the Job Performance Plan that the supervisor has these options. If the employee is given a "grace period" to improve performance, then that employee's performance should reach a "2" level by the end of a given time period; if not, then an adverse administrative job action should be taken. Don't make the error of many supervisors, who avoid giving a "1" rating where it is appropriate because they wish to avoid confronting the employee. A decision to take an adverse action against the employee at a later date will be more difficult to defend if you earlier "overrated" the employee's job performance.

On the last page of the paper version of the formal evaluation form or in the last block of the formal evaluation form in Edison, you are asked to explain how you reached your decision on the Overall Rating. For example, how did you consider particular job responsibilities to be especially important? You should provide the facts and considerations concerning the employee's job and job performance which led you to make your Overall Rating. Writing these facts and considerations down so that they would make sense to an outsider can help you be clear in your own mind about the basis of your rating. ***This explanation may be the single most important documentation of the formal evaluation form.*** If you cannot do a good job explaining how you came to your Overall Rating, then you probably need to think about that rating some more. Administrative decisions such as possible promotions or even disciplinary actions will, in part, likely be based (at some point) on your Overall Rating. Therefore, your decision on the Overall Rating deserves very careful thought and consideration. The description of employee performance for each responsibility should clearly support each rating and the responsibility ratings should support and justify the overall rating. If there could be any question about this to an outsider, it would be best to note a few explanatory comments.

Other situations where additional supervisor comments might be appropriate include the following:

- To recognize particularly outstanding areas of performance or achievement.
- To point out significant problem areas in performance which require immediate improvement.
- To recommend areas for employee development or ways the employee can achieve higher ratings.

Discussing Your Evaluation with Your Employees

Before you discuss your Formal Evaluation with your employee, you must first meet with the Reviewer. Then after your discussion with the employee, the Reviewer ***must*** sign the Formal Evaluation, signifying that he or she has discussed the evaluation with you, and that the "documentation" is consistent with the principles outlined in this Manual.

After you evaluated your employee's job performance, documented your ratings and met with the Reviewer, discuss the evaluation with your employee. If you have done a good job in completing the Job Performance Plan and discussing job performance during Interim Reviews, little of the Formal Evaluation will be a surprise to the employee. Here are some guidelines for discussing the Formal Evaluation:

1. Be honest and complete in explaining each of your ratings to the employee. Remember, good performance deserves attention just as weak performance does.
2. Ask for the employee's reactions to the ratings, and listen carefully to any comments, additions, or objections the employee may have to the ratings.
3. Concentrate your explanations on the employee's performance, ***not*** on the employee's personality characteristics. Tell the employee what the consequences of his or her performance may be.

4. Be specific in explaining what the employee must do to receive a higher rating during the next evaluation cycle. Make suggestions on how the employee can improve his or her performance.
 5. Set specific goals and dates for improving areas of weak job performance. Remember to check for improvement and give frequent feedback on the employee's progress.
 6. Be supportive. Let the employee know that you want to help improve his or her performance, and that you believe that the employee has the ability to improve.
- When you've evaluated the employee, discussed your ratings, and the employee has indicated agreement or disagreement with your ratings, the signature block must be completed on the paper version on the forms or if in Edison, the form must be acknowledged.

Handling Changes in the Employee's Job

Responsibilities may be assigned to an employee, but not be part of his or her every day activities (i.e., budget preparation.) Also, responsibilities may be assigned that are temporary and will shortly be eliminated or reassigned to another employee. In either case, these responsibilities should be included on the Job Performance Plan if they are of sufficient importance. For many jobs, there may be unexpected crises or projects which may be assigned an employee but not important enough to justify including them in the performance evaluation. At the same time, if the responsibility is one which occupies a considerable portion of the employee's time, or which is of critical importance, it may be desirable to include it on the Job Performance Plan so that the employee's performance of the responsibility (whether good or bad) may be evaluated.

In addition to predictable changes in the employee's job, unexpected changes and responsibilities may occur as a consequence of a reorganization of the work unit, changes in the procedures or objectives of the work unit, or similar reasons. If new responsibilities are added to the employee's job after the Job Performance Plan has been prepared, the new responsibilities should be added to the Job Plan if they are important. If there is adequate time (a minimum of three months) between assignment of the new responsibilities and the date the formal evaluation is due, they should be rated. If new responsibilities are added to the job plan with **less than** three months for observation and evaluation before the Formal Evaluation is due, the new responsibilities should be marked not applicable (N/A) and evaluated during the next cycle. Any additional responsibilities added to the Plan should be acknowledged by the employee and you, in Edison and signed by the employee, you and the Reviewer on a paper copy.